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BOOK REVIEWS

The Question as a Measure of Efficiency: A Critical Study of Classroom Practice.

By ROMIETT STEVENS. (Teachers College, Contributions to Education, No. 48.) New York: Columbia University, 1912. Pp. vi+95. \$1.00.

Dr. Stevens has made a skilful and much-needed diagnosis of one of the serious weaknesses of class work. She has studied a large number of class exercises in secondary schools, many of which have been stenographically reported. Her center of interest is the relationship between questioning and effectiveness. The results should make principals and teachers think and work for better conditions. The number of questions asked in a forty-five minute period runs as high as one hundred and ninety-six, and an investigation of the work of particular classes through ten entire school days shows an average of nearly four hundred questions a day.

The discussion of the problems raised is especially suggestive. Among them are:

1. The maintenance in the classroom, for considerable portions of time, of a high nervous tension where there should be natural and normal conditions.
2. The teacher seems to be doing most of the work of the class hour instead of directing the pupils in the doing.
3. Whenever teachers, either individually or collectively, preserve such a pace for any length of time, the largest educational assets that can be reckoned are verbal memory and superficial judgment.
4. There is no time in the mechanics of the schoolroom to cultivate the gentle art of expression.
5. There is little thought given to the needs of individuals.
6. We are coming, more and more, to make the classroom the place for displaying knowledge instead of a laboratory for getting and using it.
7. In our actual practice there is very little effort put forth to teach our boys and girls to be self-reliant, independent mental workers.

FRANK A. MANNY

BALTIMORE TRAINING SCHOOL FOR TEACHERS

Perfect French Possible. By MARY A. KNOWLES and BERTHE DES COMBES

FAVARD. Boston: D. C. Heath & Co., 1910. Pp. x+52. \$0.35.

The fact that this little treatise has reached its fifth edition demonstrates that it is accomplishing its purpose of giving to teachers and students some very valuable information concerning French pronunciation.

In their preface the authors of the book, whose familiarity with the French language is everywhere apparent, very justly assert that "since language is made up of sounds, . . . the acquisition of a new language should begin by a mastering of its sounds," and proceed to remark that it would be "pedagogically as absurd for a teacher of language to expect his pupil to speak before he can pronounce, as it would be for a music teacher to expect his pupil to play an air upon the violin before he has taught him to tune his instrument or to sound each note upon the strings."

This statement is so true that it is a pity that the authors stopped *en si beau chemin* and did not pursue the comparison further. The veriest child that learns music in school is taught, as early as the fourth grade, the "technical" musical terms without which no adequate study of music is possible; no manual on the subject, as far as I know, is written with the purpose in view of relieving even the youngest child of the task of mastering the technical musical terms and their application. The same statement can be extended to other subjects: no textbooks on geography, algebra, chemistry, etc., however elementary their treatment, assume that the complete elimination of technical terms, classification, and definition is either possible or desirable.

On the contrary just this elimination of the exact "technical" term, classification, and definition, and consequently of a real and accurate knowledge of the sounds under consideration, is a curious and somewhat puzzling phenomenon which attends the introduction of "phonetics" as an organic part of the study of language into American textbooks. This is true even of books which, like Frazer and Squair's and Thieme and Effinger's grammars, concede the use of exact phonetic notation of sounds (symbols) which the authors of *Perfect French Possible* deprecate. The lack of clearness and perfect accuracy which is found in some of the statements of this otherwise helpful little book is probably due to this very unnecessary restriction which the authors have placed upon themselves. Perhaps it is not too much to hope that in a sixth edition the authors will have the courage of their conviction, and if, as their preface intimates, they really believe in a "science of sounds," they will use in teaching this science the exact terms, definitions, and classifications, without which no exact study of any science is possible. In such an eventuality the following suggestions may prove helpful.

P. 2: When in the pronunciation of the English "Ann" the *a* is given the sound that approximates the vowel-basis of the French nasal *in*, this sound cannot possibly also be considered a satisfactory equivalent for French *a* in words like *ma*, *sa*, etc. Undoubtedly in the pronunciation of some people the *a* of "Ann" may approximate the French *a* in *ma*, *sa*, but then it is very different from the nasal vowel in *in*. Some correction seems necessary here, and in the vowel-chart on p. 7.

P. 3: The use of the word "staccato" (for the more exact term "tense") is questionable, since "staccato" implies a short, instantaneous 'sound, while it is a peculiarity of French vowels to remain "tense" no matter how they may be lengthened. It may be also remarked here that "vowel-quantity" seems to have been overlooked in this little treatise, although it is such a striking characteristic of Parisian French, that no pronunciation could be called perfect without due regard for it.

P. 4: In the teaching of phonetics the greatest possible care should be taken not to make any disparaging and offensive remarks concerning the pronunciation of the mother-tongue of the student. English and French habits of pronunciation do not blend happily, but English well spoken is as beautiful and musical a language as French, and "diphthongated" long vowels are just as necessary in a good English pronunciation as "undiphthongated" ones are in French. There is nothing "unfortunate" in this tendency, except when it is carried over into another language, and the caution not to carry over habits of pronunciation works both ways.

P. 21: "Vowels melting together" is a very loose designation for the pronunciation of the spirants in words like *bien*, *bois*, *lui*. The real facts in the case are that

the first vowel has not "melted together" with the second, but has become a spirant, *bien* containing the spirant of the front normal series; *bois* of the back normal; *lui* of the abnormal series. A technical, though very simple, explanation of the nature of these sounds would enable the student to pronounce the first two readily, the last with a little more practice. Attention is also necessary to the strong "voicing" of these spirants when initial or following a voiced consonant, and the loss of voice after a voiceless one. Surely French cannot become perfect without proper attention to voicing and assimilation.

P. 28: French *gn* in *régner* is a palatal, not a guttural, and the definition "made by the simultaneous production of *n* and *y* in the upper back part of the mouth" is scarcely accurate. A classification of sounds would have rendered this and similar errors impossible.

P. 38: "The tonic accent . . . is not an accent in the English sense of the word, not a *blow*, but a *caress* felt in its lingering rather than in its stress." That sounds very pretty, but what does it actually mean? Surely "lingering" on a sound implies delay, consequently lengthening, and how can this statement be reconciled with the almost "clipped-off" brevity of French stressed free vowels? "Caressing" scarcely expresses the clear-cut tense (staccato?) enunciation of the stressed syllables in words like *liberté*, *alla*. The comparatively slight difference between stressed and unstressed syllables in French may be better understood by remembering that French words of the old stock of the language really consist only of syllables that originally bore either the primary or the secondary stress, all other syllables having disappeared or remaining under the shape of a silent *e*. The difference between the primary and secondary stress can obviously not be so marked as between stressed and unstressed syllables in English.

These remarks are not all that might be made, nor can all the good that might be said about the little book find its place here. But one more remark must still be made in closing. Remaining impenitently uninitiated, we are loth to accept "*shame add am*" and "*rap lace made sank key pass*" as acceptable equivalents of *chez Madame* and *rappelez ce médecin qui passe*. It is a grave pedagogical error to keep before the eyes of the student the image of anything that he must banish from his conscious mind before he can satisfactorily do what he is attempting to do, and this is exactly the case when French sounds are presented to the student "in terms" of the English ones, which it is imperative for him to forget for the time. If the authors insist on holding out against the pedagogically sound phonetic notation, they must be strongly urged to find some device that will eschew this pedagogical unsoundness.

Common Difficulties in Reading French. By CHARLES C. CLARKE, JR. New York: William R. Jenkins Co., 1910. Pp. iv + 142.

This book is not intended to take the place either of the grammar or of the dictionary, but rather to supplement both by offering answers to most of the questions which present themselves to the second- or third-year French student in reading, and which are not solved "by classroom reference to previous grammar-drill," or whose answers can be found in a compendious dictionary only with great waste of time. Consequently the book is divided into two parts, the first of which contains the vocabulary where the words, arranged in alphabetical order, are followed by a discussion of their special meanings and other difficulties, strictly from the English point